# Ministry
# of
# Social Services And Housing

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# 1990/91 Business Plan

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Corporate Services Division

October 1989

**Province of British Columbia**

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY MINISTER

Ministry of Social Services and Housing

Parliament Buildings
Victoria
British Columbia
V8V 1X4

October, 1989

91-01669/

It gives me great pleasure to present the 1990/91 Business Plan for the Ministry of Social Services and Housing.

We have analyzed the major social, economic, and demographic trends which form the complex environment in which we deliver a broad range of programs and services. I hope that this assessment of what the future holds for us will be both interesting and useful for you.

Our analysis of this environment has focussed our program planning in four strategic directions: Independence and Initiative; Quality Service; Strengthening our Partnerships; and Sharing our Achievements. These key result areas will be reflected in our objectives for all major ministry programs.

Many people throughout the ministry have contributed to the preparation of this document as the first formal publication of what we see to be an on-going strategic planning process. I invite you to provide me with your input and feedback as we seek to improve the quality and utility of this process.

Yours truly,

R. K. Butler
Deputy Minister

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# The Ministry of Social Services and Housing

The 1989 Throne and Budget Speeches announced the direction and details of government's plan to guide British Columbia into the 1990s. Economic growth will be balanced with environmental stewardship, while economic transformation will be supported by educational reform. The underlying purpose to these directions is the enhancement of the high quality of life enjoyed by British Columbians, and sustaining our social and physical environment for future generations.

The quality and effectiveness of this ministry's programs in the 1990s will be a significant measure of the degree to which government has achieved its strategic goals. The Ministry of Social Services and Housing is one of government's major vehicles for ensuring the province's most vulnerable or most disadvantaged citizens gain an equal opportunity to share in the province's wealth and prosperity. Consequently, ministry programs are all designed to support improved levels of independence by service recipients.

The ministry's major recipient groups include the long term and temporarily unemployed, low income families and individuals, families with serious problems including child abuse and family violence, children and adults with mental handicaps, senior citizens, and children in need of suitable guardians. For all of these people, the ministry is a major gateway, through which they gain access directly, or by referral, to a broad range of government and community initiatives, services and benefits.

None of the ministry's programs are delivered in isolation. Important partnerships are struck in every community between ministry staff and caregivers, counsellors, and other professional groups, within and outside government. In most cases, ministry services are provided alongside the complementary services of other social policy ministries and agencies. The Ministry of Social Services and Housing plays a critical role as the linchpin in this provincial, community-based network.

# Mission Statement

**The ministry serves the people of British Columbia by helping them during times of need and assisting them to regain or achieve self-sufficiency.**

The ministry has a statutory mandate to provide:

- **Child Protection Programs**
- **Income Security Programs**
- **Services for the Mentally Handicapped**
- **Social Housing Programs**

As determined by government, other social services may also be provided.

# Ministry Goals

The following goals have been established to achieve the ministry's mission:

1. To provide financial assistance and support services to eligible individuals, and to assist those persons to retain or regain financial independence.
2. To provide care and/or support services which assist mentally handicapped individuals to achieve maximum independence and to participate as full members of their communities.
3. To receive and investigate reports of abuse and neglect of children. To fulfill this goal in a manner which maintains or restores the integrity of the family whenever possible.
4. To assist seniors, the disabled, and low-income individuals to reduce their housing costs for suitable housing.
5. To initiate measures to increase the supply of affordable rental housing.

# Ministry Values

In pursuing its goals, the ministry is guided by the following values:

## Self-reliance

Whether ministry staff work with income assistance clients, families in crisis, or people with mental handicaps, the primary focus is on assisting individuals to achieve their maximum level of self-reliance.

In some circumstances, temporary financial assistance is needed to help a person achieve economic self-reliance; in other circumstances, vocational assistance, family counselling, shelter support, or personal living skills training provide the extra boost needed by an individual trying to achieve maximum self-reliance.

## The Central Role Of The Family

With all its clients, and in particular with children in need, the ministry recognizes and attempts to enhance the primary role of the family in caring for its members. The basic importance of family integrity is a consistent and strong value held by ministry staff. There are times when the protection of family members requires family separation.

## Compassion And Respect

In its work with individuals receiving income assistance, children in need of protection, families and the mentally handicapped, compassion and respect for the person in need remain central, motivating values which shape the ways in which the ministry conducts its affairs.

## Equity

Treating people equitably, and the equitable allocation of resources, are essential to fair administration of public programs.

## Accountability And Efficient Administration

The proper expenditure of public funds and delivery of services requires that services be provided efficiently, and that service-providers be accountable for the quantity and quality of their services.

# Environmental Assessment

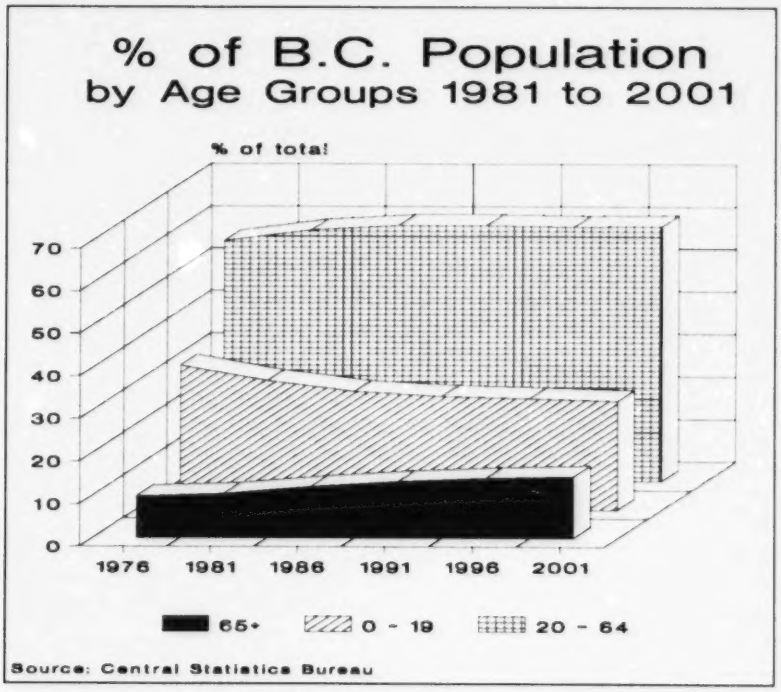
In order for the ministry to accomplish its Mission, it is necessary to identify and analyze those factors which affect the ministry and public demand for its services. This overview outlines selected **External** and **Internal** factors which are relevant to the work of the ministry.

The factors which are discussed provide a framework for considering long and short range policy issues. This assessment is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. It does, however, provide a context for debate during the process of establishing priorities and program objectives.

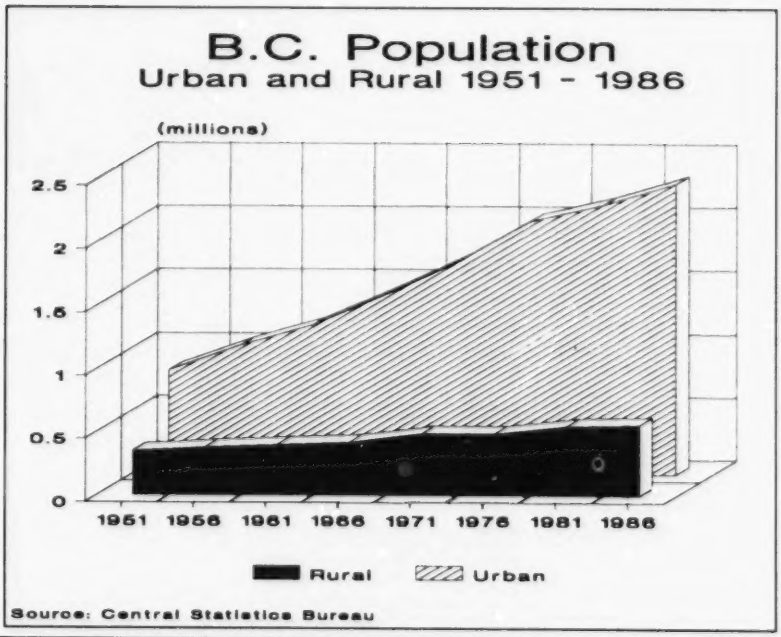
## External Factors

### Demographics

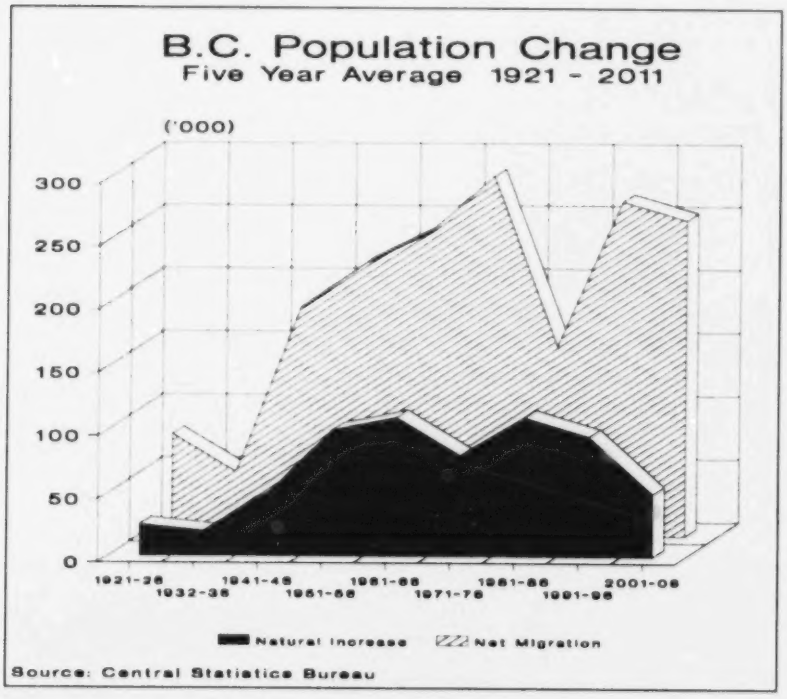
- A slowed rate of population growth will continue to be a mix of natural increase, immigration and migration from other parts of Canada. The number of births will increase in the next five years, but will fall by the mid 90's as "baby boomers" move beyond their child bearing years.
- In the next decade, the provincial population will age and become more diverse due to increased immigration from Pacific Rim countries. The 75+ age group is the fastest growing cohort. In this group, women outnumber men, 2 to 1, due to greater life expectancy.
- As the "caregiver" age groups stabilize in percentage terms and "age" overall, it will become increasingly difficult to provide suitable child care resources. Competitive levels of remuneration may pose significant cost and affordability issues.

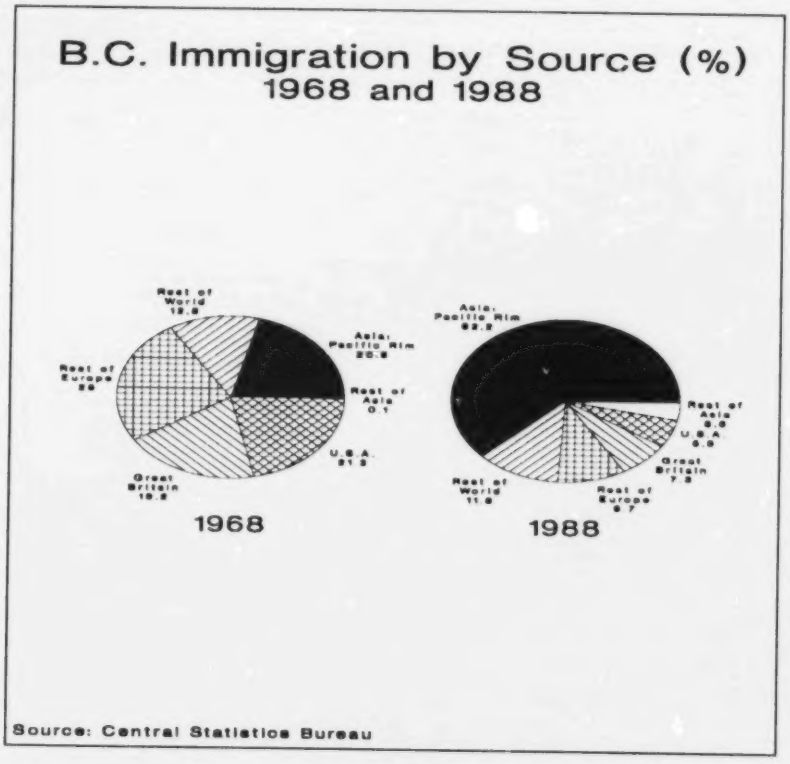


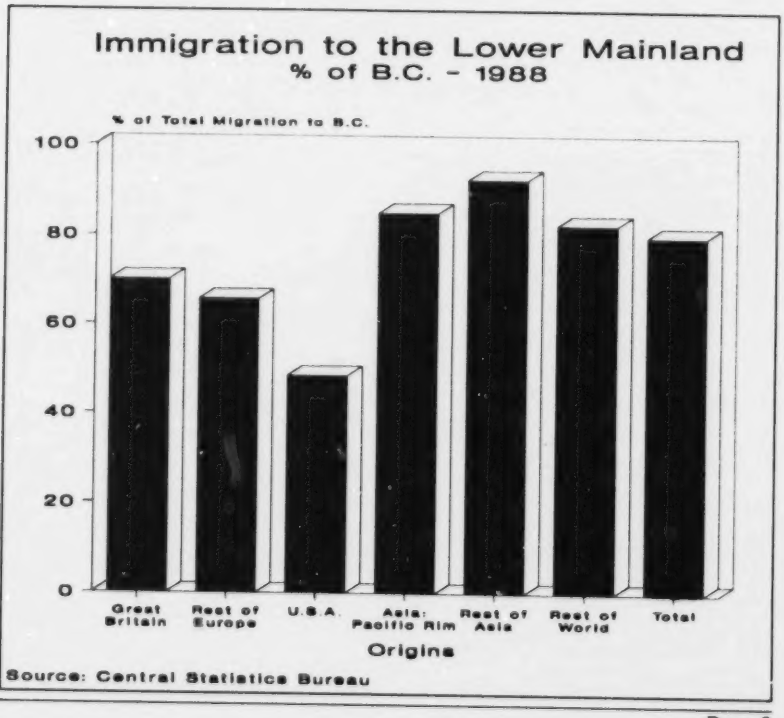

- The distribution of provincial population will change considerably, accentuating current trends towards urbanization, and concentration of seniors in the lower mainland, Vancouver Island and the Okanagan. Some areas may experience a population decline.



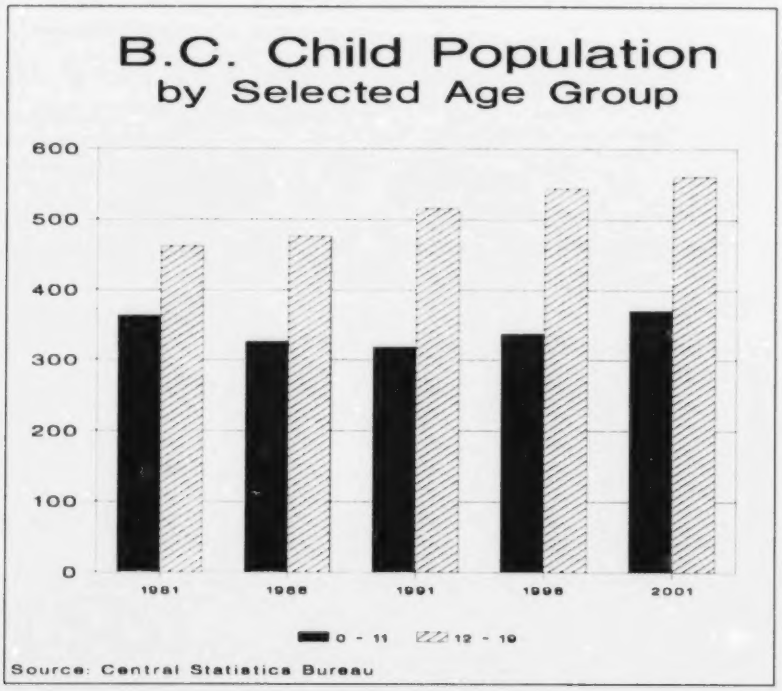
- Demand for ministry services will vary more widely between regions. By the mid 90's, demographic changes alone will accentuate current differences between rural and urban areas of the province. For example, demand for senior's programs will be concentrated in the areas where seniors tend to congregate while other parts of the province may experience a decline in demand.
- More services for the frail elderly, particularly elderly widows, will be needed.
- The lower mainland, particularly, will become an increasingly demanding environment for the ministry. The combination of urbanization, concentration of new immigrants and an inflow of seniors will intensify challenges in delivering the full range of programs.




B.C. Immigration by Source (%)
1968 and 1988
Rest of World 19.8
Asia: Pacific Rim 25.8
Rest of Europe 25
Rest of Asia 0.1
U.S.A. 21.3
Great Britain 19.8
1968
Asia: Pacific Rim 53.2
Rest of Asia 5.0
U.S.A. 6.5
Great Britain 7.5
Rest of World 11.8
Rest of Europe 8.7
1988
Source: Central Statistics Bureau


Immigration to the Lower Mainland
% of B.C. - 1988
% of Total Migration to B.C.
100
80
60
40
20
0
Great Britain
Rest of Europe
U.S.A.
Asia: Pacific Rim
Rest of Asia
Rest of World
Total
Origins
Source: Central Statistics Bureau

The focus of child welfare services will shift to the younger age group as the percentage of teenagers in the child population declines. However, in recent years the child in care population has decreased while the absolute number of children has increased.

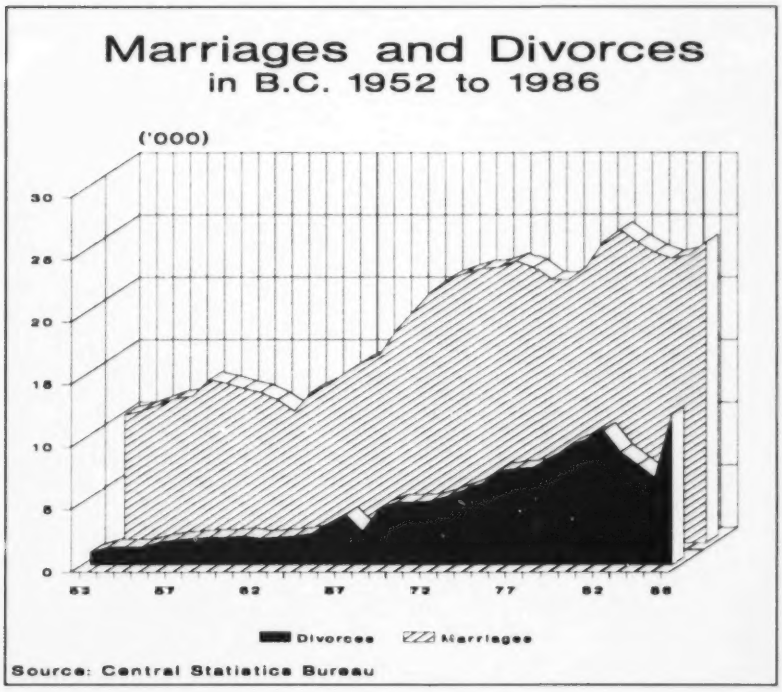



Each age group presents different needs for ministry services. For example, the younger age groups will produce increased demand for infant development, out of school and other day care programs, as well as potential increases in child protection reports. The 12 - 15 year age group will create a manageable increase in demand for specialized child care resources, while 16 - 19 year olds may need added supports to independence as they approach adulthood.

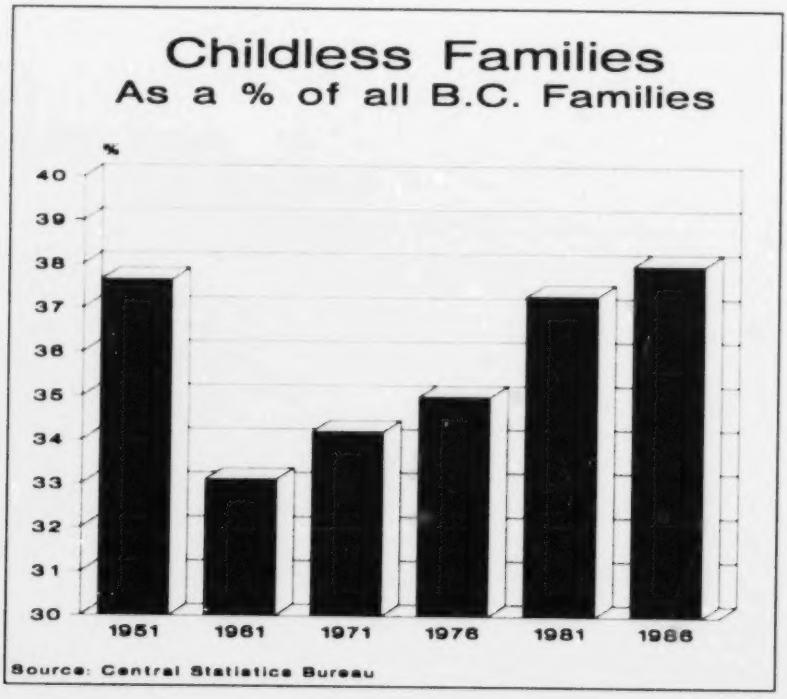
## The Family

Changes to the structure of the family since the early 70's have been dramatic.

- Today, less than 10% of families fit the traditional "nuclear" family model - one marriage, two parents, two children, one parent working outside the home, etc.
- Over 33% of marriages end in divorce

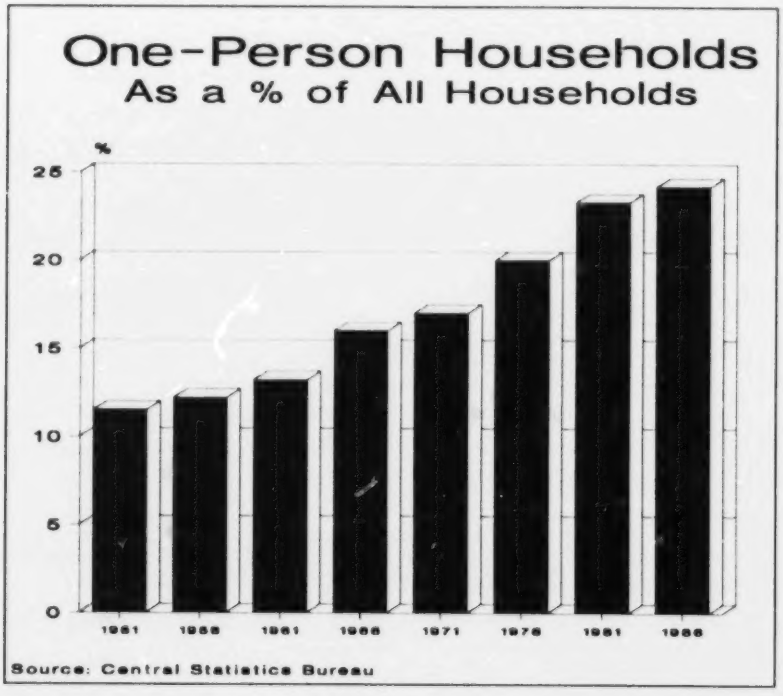


- The average size of families has declined as most now have one or two children.

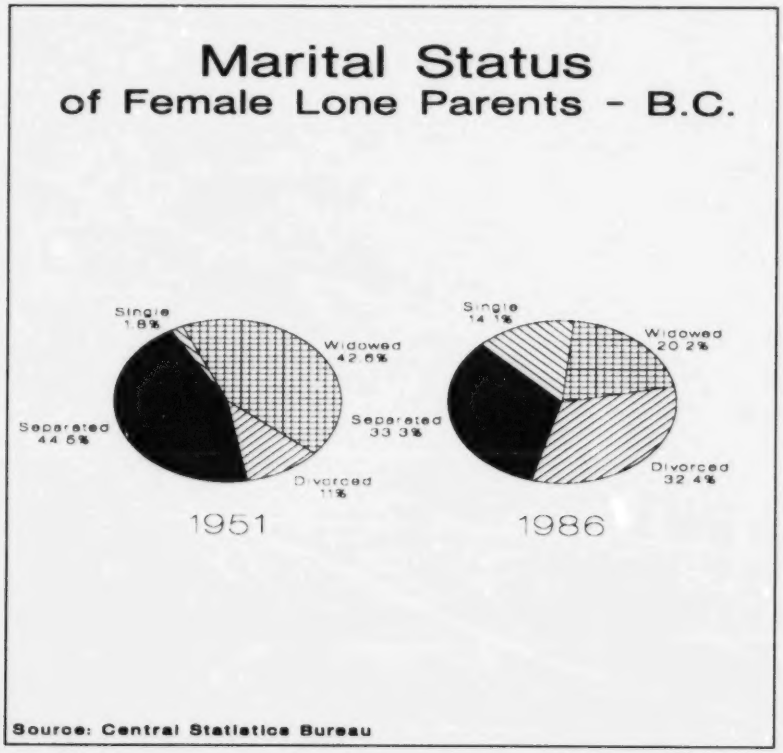


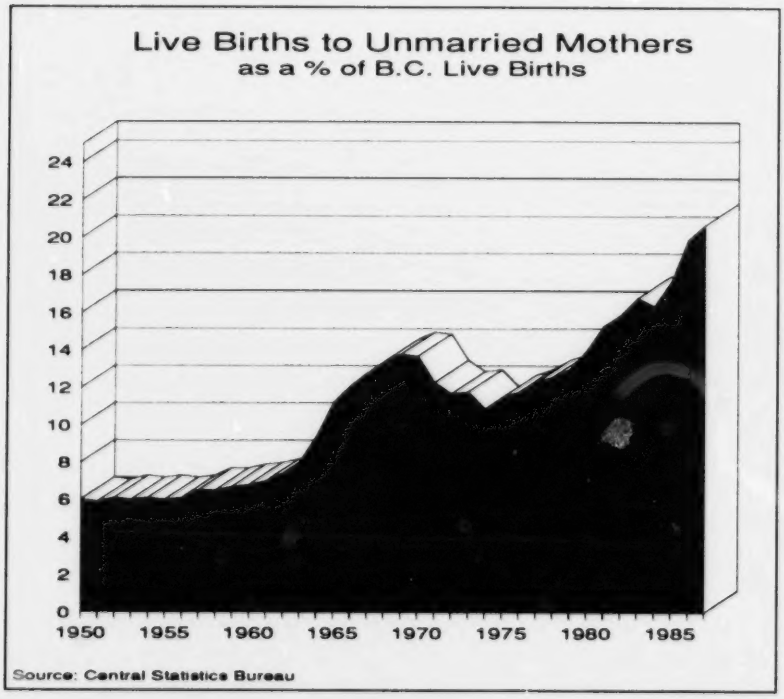

- The majority of single parent families are headed by women, and of these, a disproportionate percentage require public support.
- Child care outside the home has become a societal norm, as a support to the economic independence of families.

- The number of one-person households has risen. This reflects the increase in the elderly living alone, as well as lifestyle choice and the deferment of marriage by young men and women.




- The generation of children who have experienced divorce and life in a single parent or blended family are now moving into their child bearing years.
- Women's participation in the workforce outside the home now approaches 60%, with almost 75% participation by those aged 20 to 25. This will likely accentuate the demand for quality child care outside the home throughout the 90's. If current trends continue, the proportion of single parents will also increase. We have already seen the emergence of the growing single parent caseload. This group will be the focus of ongoing concern due to their relative vulnerability in the face of rapidly changing economic conditions.


Marital Status
of Female Lone Parents - B.C.
Single
1.8%
Widowed
42.6%
Separated
44.6%
Divorced
11%
1951
Single
14.1%
Widowed
20.2%
Separated
33.3%
Divorced
32.4%
1986
Source: Central Statistics Bureau


Live Births to Unmarried Mothers
as a % of B.C. Live Births
24
22
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
1950
1955
1960
1965
1970
1975
1980
1985
Source: Central Statistics Bureau

## The Economy

The provincial economy is relatively robust and, prior to the federal budget, the provincial Minister of Finance projected a modest growth rate. It is too early to tell how the federal budget and Free Trade Agreement will affect the provincial economy. The possibility of a minor slowdown must be considered, along with the effect of tax increases and increased housing prices on those with minimal or fixed incomes. As at February, 1989 the Consumer Price Index (CPI), Vancouver was up 3.9% from a year ago. The CPI increase for Victoria was 3.6% and for Canada was 4.4%. Price increases seriously affect the ability of people on fixed incomes, including income assistance recipients, to meet their basic needs.

### Employment

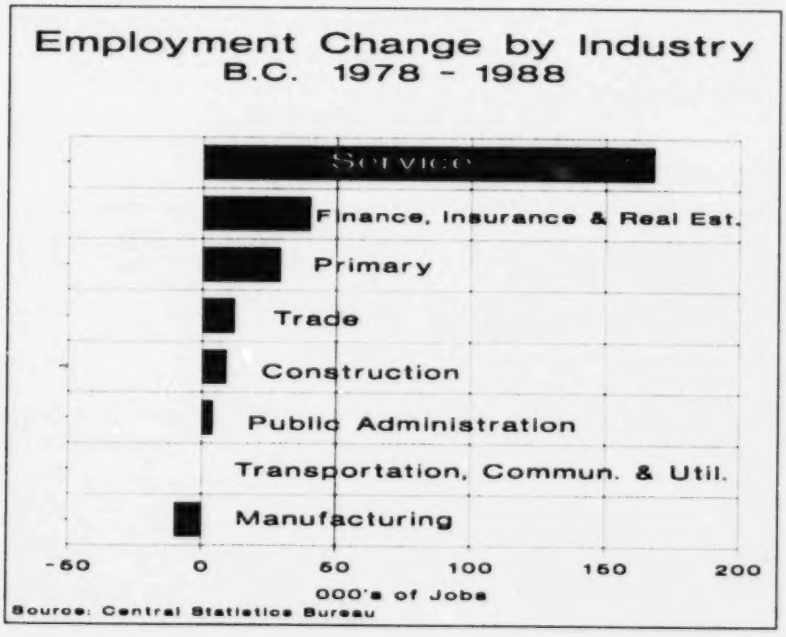
As at February, 1989 unemployment in B.C. was 9.9%, down from 10.7% one year ago. The figures for Canada are 7.6% and 7.8% respectively. Increased levels of unemployment or increased duration of unemployment lead directly to an increase in the income assistance caseload.

### Unemployment Insurance (U.I.C.)

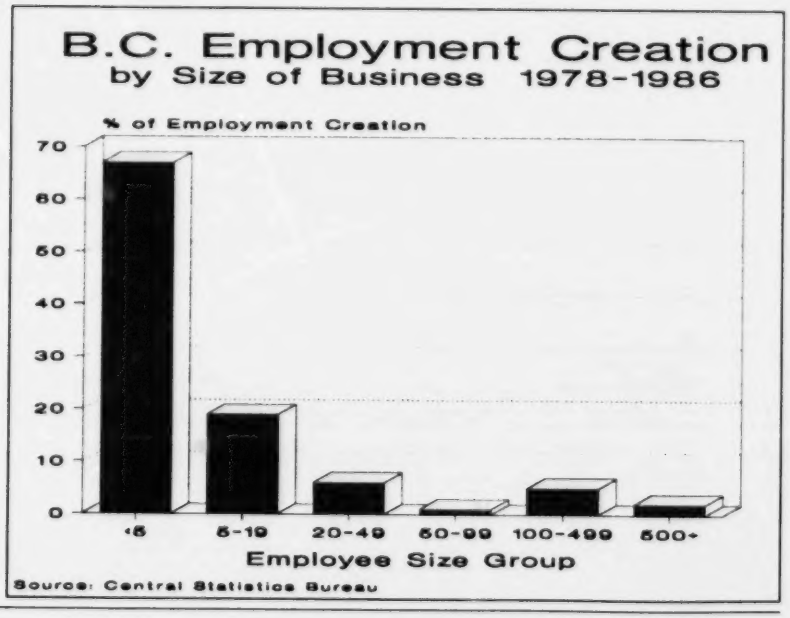
As at December, 1988, U.I.C. benefits paid (B.C.) had risen 2.2% from a year ago.

## The Changing Labour Market

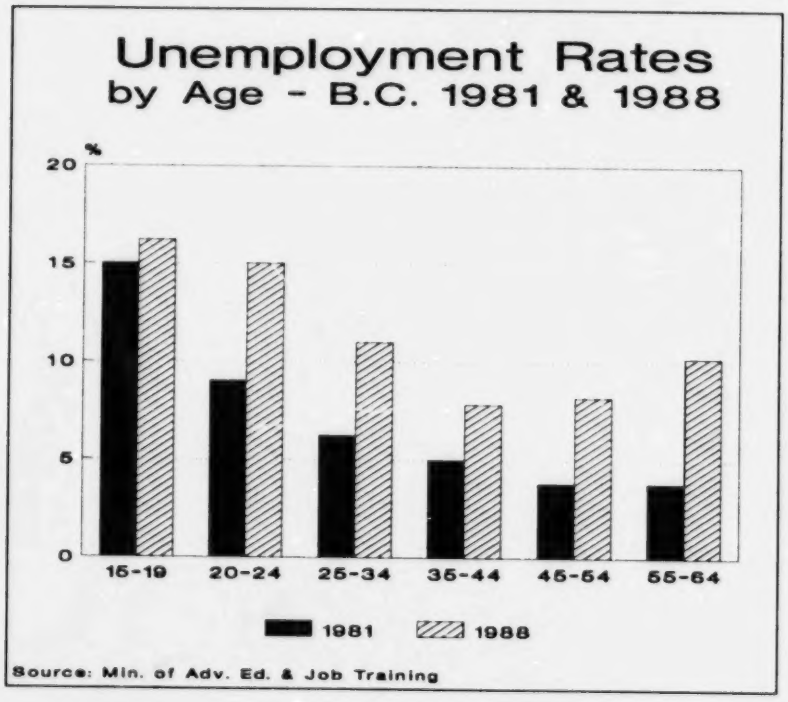
- Without major new developments, the primary resource sector will not be a major source of new jobs. In the last, as well as in the next decade, the service sector will be the primary source of employment.



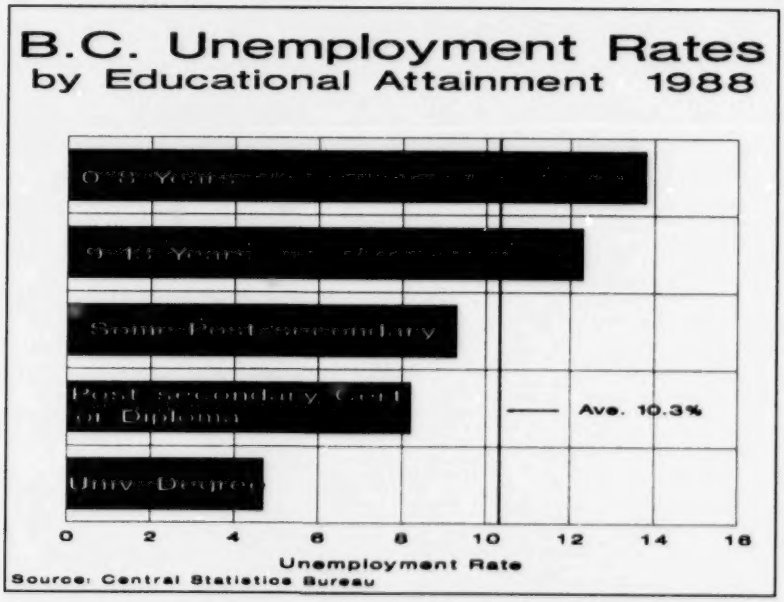

- Since the recession most new jobs have been produced by small business.



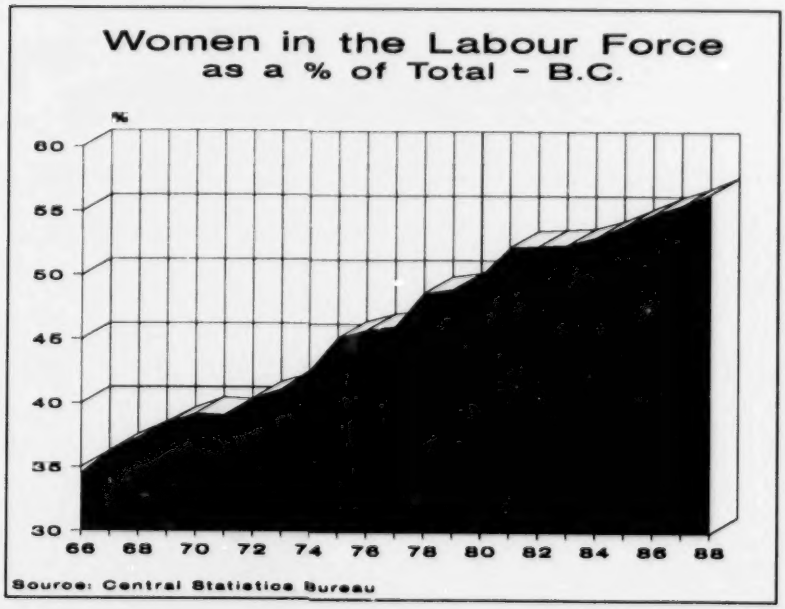
- Entry-level wages in the service sector tend to be at or slightly above the minimum wage level. Overall wages tend to be lower than those in the resource and manufacturing sectors.
- Technological innovation has resulted in greater difficulty for the unemployed to find a new job. Older workers have been particularly hard hit and this will likely continue.



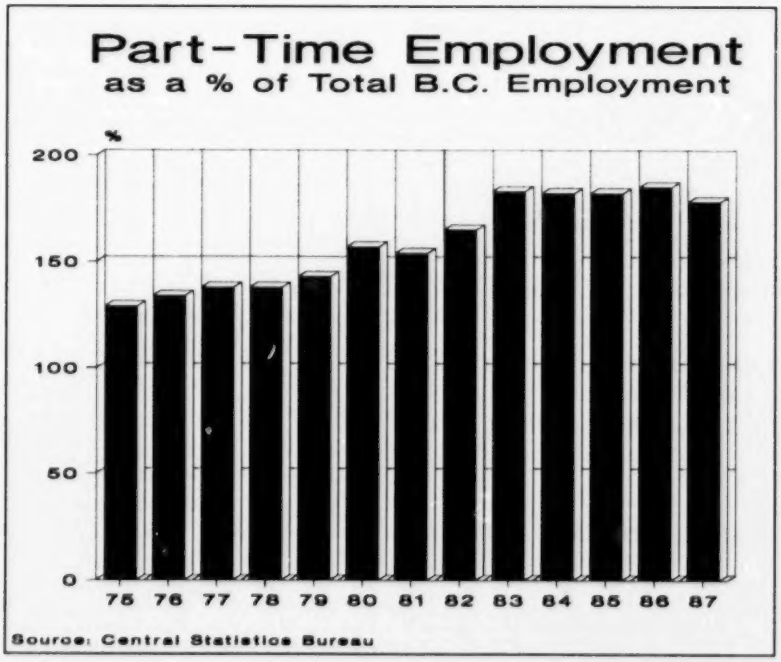
- In recent years the direct link between education and employability has become more pronounced. This trend will continue.


B.C. Unemployment Rates
by Educational Attainment 1988
Ave. 10.3%
0 2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16
Unemployment Rate
Source: Central Statistics Bureau

- Women's wage levels now average 60% of male wages.
- It is predicted that women will comprise the majority of labour force growth in the next decade, and overall participation rates for men and women will likely equalize toward the end of the 1990's.



- The proportion of part time jobs has increased.




- As we move through the 90's the automated office may emerge to the detriment of employment of women. The net effect of social and economic change may be the relative feminization of low income living. The increased numbers of elderly widows, the erosion of available employment opportunities, and the potential increase in numbers of single parents, chiefly women, has profound implications for the size and composition of the ministry's caseload.
- Economic transformation, together with increased competition from entry level workers with greater education may create additional barriers to independence for ministry clients.

## Housing

As at January, 1989, housing starts in urban B.C. were up 73.7% from the previous year. However, in-migration to the province exceeded 30,000, and rents have risen. The result has been a shortage of affordable rental housing, and the erosion of the value of SAFER benefits and GAIN shelter allowances.

The provincial government's Housing Action Plan is designed to increase the supply of affordable housing, and to provide enhanced rental assistance and home-owner assistance.

The proposed Goods and Services tax announced in the federal budget will likely cause a rise in the cost of housing. The 9% GST, which will take effect January 1, 1991, will apply to new housing units and everything that goes into building them. The federal government has promised a corresponding program to assist home buyers, but the details of this program are not available.

## Provincial Government Environment

Government has emphasized the importance of economic growth, environmental preservation, education and community based programs for people, and the consequent importance of an integrated approach to economic and social policies.

This ministry is well positioned to contribute to improved quality of life in all regions by fulfilling its mandate through a community-based approach to service delivery.The ministry's recent reorganization along specialized program lines, and demonstrated ability to implement initiatives in cooperation with other ministries provides the means for a targeted, flexible approach to future trends and changes.

Government's underlying belief is that the people of British Columbia are best served by public programs which contribute to increased independence. This belief has long been fundamental to the ministry's approach to the delivery of its services.

### Social Policy Initiatives

Within this framework of government priorities a number of opportunities exist for the ministry to represent the interests of ministry clients:

- The **Task Force on Employment** will gather information which relates directly to the issue of structural unemployment and how labour market changes will affect workers in different parts of the province. This will be an opportunity for the ministry to identify employment related barriers on behalf of its clientele, and to propose solutions.
- The provincial **Access for All** post-secondary education plan advocates regionally driven, joint economic and social planning, focussed on the linkage between education and employment. Interministry cooperation will ensure access to programs needed by employable recipients of our ministry's services.
- The report of the **Royal Commission on Education** emphasized the need to meet the non-educational needs of school-aged children. This poses challenges for inter-ministry planning and service provision.
- The Seniors Advisory Council and Office for Seniors will lead and coordinate broad public discussion of services for seniors. The discussion paper - **Toward A Better Age** - is a timely opportunity to reshape services for seniors based on comprehensive analysis, broad public input and inter-ministry cooperation.
- The **Substance Abuse Initiative** - T.R.Y. - bears directly on ministry services. Expanded programs are available for referral from ministry offices. It is likely that increased understanding of, and attention to the role of substance abuse in child protection, family violence and family breakdown will result from this initiative.
- **Justice Reform** is directed to achieving greater access to and understanding of the justice system. Considerable attention is being given to the broad area of family law, with consequent planning and staffing implications for the ministry.

## Public Expectations

### Accountability

Public demands and government direction for increased accountability and effective program management will continue. These factors may receive heightened priority if the national or provincial economy falters. In this ministry increased accountability has been assured through a number of changes including:

- A structural reorganization which has dedicated specialized management and staff resources to each of the three major businesses - Income Assistance/Employment Initiatives, Family and Children's Services, and Rehabilitation and Support Services.
- An expanded Management Information System (M.I.S.) and systems development plan for the ongoing implementation and refinement of computer systems which support operational effectiveness.
- Implementation of computer based day care payment system and design of a financial commitment control system.
- Design and implementation of core training programs for supervisors, managers and all groups of field staff.
- Establishment of linkages with community colleges, the Open Learning Agency and universities to provide province wide access to professional development educational opportunities for ministry staff.
- Development of a three year plan for the transformation of all ministry programs and services to a goal directed approach. This will allow programs to be delivered and monitored in terms of actual performance.

**Self Determination**

The delivery of services generally has been subject to increased public scrutiny and increased politicization by advocacy groups. As we enter the 90's we can expect more scrutiny and increased demands for self determination by Native peoples, the disabled and other minorities. This, together with responsibilities and work flowing from decisions in Charter test cases, will add to the degree of change in an already turbulent environment. The ministry's approach will continue to emphasize careful planning in consultation and cooperation with the affected groups.

**Inter-Ministry Coordination**

Inter-ministry coordination will become even more important in an environment of accelerating change. This ministry took the lead in the formalization of the cooperative process when the Inter-Ministry Child Abuse Handbook was developed. At this time, major reforms are occurring in all the other social policy ministries - Education, Attorney General, Solicitor General, Health, Advanced Education and Labour and Consumer Services. The magnitude of these reforms will impact this ministry's role from all sides.

## Legal Factors

The **Charter** has a potentially profound effect on government policies and programs. It has already been used in British Columbia to strike down income assistance regulations which created differential rates based on age. Federal human rights legislation has been used to obtain a family benefit based on a homosexual relationship, and the **Charter** could potentially allow this as well. There is a case currently before the British Columbia Court of Appeal concerning access rights of a homosexual father based on a **Charter** claim. We can expect this type of litigation to expand, and should ensure that any differential benefit structures based on age, gender, etc. can be justified.

Other types of litigation can have far-reaching effects as well. The recent **Findlay** case in Manitoba, currently under appeal, is based on a Canadian Assistance Plan (CAP) agreement and affects the ability of the provinces to collect income assistance overpayments.

## Federal Government Policy

Because many ministry programs are cost shared, and because ministry income security programs are a last resort for people in need, federal policy is a crucial environmental factor.

The following federal budget initiatives have a potential impact:

- Changes to the Unemployment Insurance program may increase the number of persons who need income assistance.
- Deferral of the $4 billion portion of the national child care program which had been set aside for cost shared programs with the provinces.
- It is anticipated that increases in the current federal manufacturers sales tax, and the planned federal goods and services tax will increase the cost of housing and other goods and services. Doubling of the sales tax credit will not alleviate these increased costs for many British Columbians.

## The Impact Of Technology

Technological innovation will be an increasingly important external factor with significant implications for the ministry in terms of both the external and internal environments.

Already the ministry's GAIN payment - Management Information Systems (M.I.S.) system has revolutionized the delivery of income assistance and related services. The PROFS system has enabled instantaneous communication on a ministry-wide basis. This has improved consistency and flow of information and has reduced necessary paper flow and telephone usage for PROFS users. The Social Work Services - M.I.S. will support the achievement of major efficiencies. Other innovations, such as the new daycare payment system, commitment monitoring system, and electronic funds transfer offer hints of what is to come. Although transition is always difficult, the ministry must ensure the final result of the use of high technology can be measured in terms of increased staff time with recipients, improved quality of services, and improved information to enable timely program/policy enhancements.

Internal applications of new technology are obvious to ministry staff. What is less obvious is the link between technological innovation in society at large and demand for ministry services. For example, increased use of technology is directly linked to the increase in the number of recipients of income assistance.

Since the mid 70's large corporations in the resource and manufacturing sectors have invested in technology rather than labour in order to meet the competitive challenge presented by the international market place. Today, these sectors are reporting record production levels. However, the number of people employed in these mills and factories is roughly the same as in the late 70's. Fewer workers are needed to produce a certain level of goods/services. As a result, income assistance caseloads have not dropped as quickly as we might expect since 1985, and older workers are finding it more difficult, if not impossible, to find a job suited to their skills and experience.

At present, technological change is an issue when any major union agreement is up for renegotiation. The challenge of using technology to improve productivity in the public sector while ensuring appropriate transition planning for displaced workers will be of increasing importance. Existing technology already provides the capacity for automated work stations. We can expect, therefore, that technology will have significant impacts within government.

In the 1990's we can also expect that, given the increasing importance of inter-ministry coordination, technology will be used to enhance the flow of information between ministries. The potential creation of common data bases will

offer opportunities for integrated planning which do not exist today.

Service delivery will also be revolutionized by the growth of high tech aids to daily living which virtually eliminate the barriers that lack of speech, sight or hearing have presented in the past. Significant enhancements in these areas, as well as mechanical aids, telecommunications and the emergence of "smart" apartments will offer levels of independence and leisure undreamt of until now. Already we have seen how the use of technology to conduct genetic manipulations or to transform the normal process of childbirth have raised serious, fundamental ethical questions - **"We can do 'this', but should we?"**

As we enter the 1990's we know technology will be a primary change agent. As a primary instrument of government's social policy we will be drawn into some of the most difficult social and ethical questions our society has ever faced.

## Labour Relations Climate

The post-recession recovery of the provincial economy will be moderated slightly in the next year according to the Minister of Finance and private sector forecasts. However, recent wage settlements have raised the wage expectations of organized labour. Additionally, the Business Council of British Columbia projects a heightened focus on the negotiation of benefits such as enhanced leave options and pension indexing. In the public sector privatization and downsizing continues to be a central issue, as reflected in the recent BCGEU leadership vote.

# Internal Factors: Ministry Services and Dynamics

## Ministry Structure

The planning process for service delivery must take account of the ministry's decentralized structure. Community-based, specialized or integrated district offices deliver ministry programs. Activities of district offices are carried out by line workers, who report to district office supervisors. They in turn report to area managers, who also have reporting, budgeting and planning responsibilities. Areas are grouped into regions, under the direction of regional directors. Three program divisions in headquarters develop, review, coordinate and monitor programs and program policy. Six other headquarters divisions provide centralized support services to the ministry executive and to field staff in the regions.

The ministry executive committee consists of the deputy minister and four assistant deputy ministers in the following areas: Superintendent of Family and Children's Service, Field Operations, Corporate Planning, and Finance and Administration.

## Reorganization

Reorganization in the field is now complete. Despite the uncertainty which always accompanies major organizational change, ministry staff provided uninterrupted service delivery of a high standard during the reorganization process.

## Staff Training

Reorganization entailed increased levels of staff movement within and between regions and increased recruitment activity. Staff training resources were centralized to support the development of new staff and the staff in newly specialized district offices. Core training programs have been designed and delivered for all staff new to their line work, administrative support or supervisory positions.

The challenge facing the ministry now is to give regional directors and area managers the flexibility to provide for continuous staff training on a varied and as-needed basis. This is being done by allocating a large portion of the staff training budget to the regions.

Another training issue is the increased need for very specialized skills, e.g. the ability to interview a child who may have been sexually abused. This could involve further specialization of line staff as well as special training.

## Regional Equity

The ministry makes major efforts to ensure that resources are allocated equitably throughout the province. These include a recent restructuring of the Family and Children's Services budgeting process which requires each region to account for its resource use and needs.

The recent specialization of offices by function will make it easier to assess regional resource allocation on a program area basis.

## Income Security

As at February, 1989, the total GAIN caseload was 116,024, down 2.9% from the previous year. However, monthly expenditures were at $62,576,000, down only 0.8% from the previous year. This is because while there was an overall caseload decrease, there was no decrease in single women, one-parent families and GAIN for handicapped cases. The cost per case for the latter two categories is significantly higher than the remainder of the caseload.

Recent reports on income security have highlighted public concerns. The Ontario "Transitions" report recommended major reforms respecting benefit structures, rates, adequacy measures, and income top-up programs for the working poor. The 1989 SPARC Report, *Regaining Dignity* recommended raising rates substantially; changing the benefit structure to reflect the higher costs of raising children as they grow older; raising the shelter allowance ceiling; and the establishment of an Income Assistance Review Committee.

B.C. has recently raised both support and shelter rates, and simplified the benefit structure, but we can expect these types of concerns to continue to be raised.

Another factor which affects income security programs is the increasing number of families headed by single women. A disproportionate number of such families require income assistance; opportunities for independence programs need to reflect this.

## Children In Care

As at February, 1989, 6,344 children were in care, down from 6,406 in February, 1988. This reflects a downward trend over at least the past 10 years of the number of children in care. The 0 - 19 age population increased during the latter part of this period and is expected to increase steadily to the mid-90's. For the first time our caseload trends are running counter to population trends - the child in care caseload continued to decline despite an increase in the child population.

As noted above in the sections on demographic factors, the composition of the age 0 - 19 population is changing; an increased proportion falls within the younger child groups. The implications of this for the child in care population are difficult to determine, except that we can anticipate that more services for younger children will be needed.

A number of other factors noted earlier have affected and will continue to affect child protection services, in particular the increased use of litigation and public demand for accountability. The ministry is responding to these issues through training, a task force on practice standards, and a review of the Family and Child Services Act.

## Deinstitutionalization

Government commitment to this principle is reflected in Projects '88, '89 and '90, under which residents of Woodlands and Glendale institutions are being provided with community residences. In response to the recommendations of the Woodlands Review, individual planning and family involvement have been emphasized in the process.

Deinstitutionalization raises important challenges in the areas of monitoring and community support. Community residences must be carefully monitored to ensure the well being of residents.

Community supports must be in place, particularly for emotionally or medically fragile persons. This of course has inter-ministry implications.

## Partnership With The Community

The ministry contracts with over 2000 community based businesses and non-profit agencies, as well as with individual professionals. Purchased services represent over 40% of total ministry expenditures, excluding GAIN.

This reflects the ministry's commitment to deliver services in partnership with the community. It is cost-effective, and it captures the benefits of using the many qualified private sector agencies and professionals.

This means of delivering services demands effective contracting practices: it raises issues of contract design and monitoring. The ministry must ensure that contracts specify the services contracted for in terms which facilitate the measurement of performance and quality. Sufficient resources must be allocated to contract monitoring to ensure that the ministry's mandated functions are fulfilled.

Partnership with the community also means working and planning with affected groups by involving them in need identification and problem solving.

## Program Design And Evaluation

The increased demand for accountability, both from the public and from within government, affects program design. We need to be able to show that our programs are accomplishing their purposes in a cost-effective manner. This entails setting measurable program objectives, and regular evaluation.

# Strategic Priorities

Consistent with overall government priorities, the following are the ministry's strategic priorities - its directions and major challenges for the early 1990's:

- **Independence and Initiative**
- **Strengthening Our Partnerships**
- **Commitment to Quality Service**
- **Sharing Our Achievements**

# Independence And Initiative

Independence is the cornerstone of the ministry's policy direction. It is reflected in the emphasis on:

- increased opportunities for independence for income assistance recipients,
- deinstitutionalization and new approaches to community living,
- day care options,
- service and resource planning for mentally handicapped persons which focuses on individuals,
- family supports which foster the integrity of the family,
- encouragement of the adoption of children with special needs, and
- Native Child Welfare Agreements designed to encourage greater participation and responsibility for native child welfare matters by Bands/Tribal Councils, in a mutually agreeable manner.

In the 1990's, the ministry will continue to target these areas, with the aim of fostering increased responsibility and independence.

# Strengthening Our Partnerships

As noted earlier, a large portion of the ministry's services are provided under contract by community agencies and businesses. This demands cost-effective and careful contracting practices.

However, partnership with the community goes well beyond contracted service delivery. For the ministry to serve the people, the community must contribute to the identification of needs and problems, and be involved in the solutions.

The ministry's community includes not only non-governmental agencies and businesses, but also other provincial ministries, government agencies, and other levels of government. The ministry will maximize involvement with other parts of the public sector in order to ensure effective, coordinated planning and service delivery.

Particular attention will be devoted to Federal-Provincial Relations. This partnership is in transition as a result of the Federal budget and the Meech Lake Accord. Maximizing cost sharing has been identified as a Provincial priority and will entail a Canada Assistance Plan review, as well as ongoing negotiations in the areas of child care, supports to families, pension and income security reforms, employment and training, and services for Native British Columbians.

In order to maximize the potential of its partnership with local communities around the province, the ministry is also working towards regional sufficiency - that is, sufficient resources for each region's service requirements should be available within that region. This will entail ongoing examination and decision making about all aspects of resource allocation, within and between regions, in response to social and economic changes.

As we now look forward in time, we must build on the foundation of past directions by attending more closely to the important partnerships we have helped to create, and on which we now depend. This will entail:

- enhanced inter-ministry coordination of services,
- a proactive approach to Federal/Provincial negotiations,
- continued emphasis on excellence in ministry contracting practices,

- involving the community in need/problem definition so the community is better able to contribute to the solution,
- closer ties with the economic and business community,
- increased openness in ministry operations, and
- the cooperative involvement of our partners in marketing ministry programs and services.

## Commitment To Quality Service

Achievement of the highest standards of practice and service delivery is a primary goal. In the 1990's the ministry will emphasize:

- development of a ministry strategic planning process based on stated goals and objectives which are consistent with overall Government direction, and which provide an integrated focus for addressing cross-ministry issues,
- articulation of standards of professional social work practice,
- implementation of clear child care resource standards,
- priority attention to staff recruitment, training and retention,
- establishment of a more consistent performance appraisal and development process,
- ongoing commitment to a participatory management style which involves staff in ministry decision making processes,
- development of ministry wide commitment to common, achievable goals and objectives.
- simplified administration, including form and paper reduction, systems and policy manual improvements.

# Sharing Our Achievements

Given the nature of the ministry's mission, mandate, goals and services we can expect increased public scrutiny and interest in what we do and how we do it. We do not expect the media to devote much time and attention to the positive aspects of our work. Negative occurances which receive media attention are in the minority. Since we carry a significant burden of public trust, we also carry a complementary responsibility to ensure the public receives a balanced view of our performance, programs and services. Consequently, we cannot allow our credibility to rest on the selective perceptions of others, whose primary interest bears no relation to our goals, values, or mandate. Our credibility must turn on the outcomes of our services for the people who receive them.

To maintain and enhance the ministry's stature the following strategies have been established:

- to provide information needed by the public in developing a good understanding of the ministry's mission, goals and programs, and to ensure the public knows how to access programs when needed.
- to develop communications which inform the public about the complete network of community-based services funded by the ministry.
- to encourage non-governmental organizations that are funded by the ministry to acknowledge publicly the support received.
- to inform the public about the value of services and contributions of caregivers and other stakeholders.
- to tell the public about the "good news" stories and achievements of the many recipients who make excellent use of the opportunities afforded them through ministry services.
- to develop communications which keep ministry staff well informed about programs, services and initiatives.
- to encourage ministry staff to be more directly involved in telling our story in their own community.
- to develop research and evaluation information which will improve ministry program and policy development, as well as increase our ability to describe the linkage between our services and positive outcomes for people.

- to use and share available information, in tandem with research and evaluation activities, to develop a corporate culture of inquisitiveness which encourages creativity and innovation, and which assists us to improve our practice.
- to develop a consistent appearance for all ministry publications to aid in establishing a clear ministry identity as an integrated, proactive organization.

# Major Program Strategic Priorities

The ministry provides the following four major programs:

- **Family and Children's Services**
- **Income Assistance/Employment Initiatives**
- **Rehabilitation and Support Services**
- **Housing Programs**

Each of these major programs serves as an umbrella for a broader range of specific programs and initiatives which have been designed to achieve one or more of the ministry's five goals (see page 3). Consequently, the ministry goal characterizes each major program and governs the way the ministry's overall strategic priorities will be reflected in the delivery of specific services.

On the following pages the ministry's strategic priorities for 1990-91 are more clearly defined in terms of the major programs.

In some cases these priorities are a continuation of current initiatives. In other cases, these priorities represent the first step of a long range plan to adjust current programs in response to identified trends and government directions.

These priorities have been identified in the full knowledge that new events and issues may emerge in the next few months which cause adjustments to this business plan. In the context of these changes, as well as government direction and the province's fiscal position, these priorities will be followed within the limits of the ministry's ability to direct and allocate available resources.

# Independence And Initiative

## Major Program: Rehabilitation and Support Services

**Program Category: Support to Children with Special Needs**

- To promote greater involvement and responsibility by the community in the 1990s for supporting the independence of families with children who have disabilities.
- Based on an evaluation of the At-Home Support Program, to examine options in support of a federal/provincial strategy comprised of cash transfers, tax reform and other alternatives which enables parents to take the lead role in caring for a child with disabilities.

**Program Category: Woodlands**

- To continue the planned downsizing of Woodlands in a manner which builds the required support network in the community in cooperation with parents, municipalities and other interested parties.

**Program Category: Services to Seniors**

- To develop program directions which assist seniors to enhance or maintain their independence. These proposals will be guided by government's response to the report of the senior's task force - Toward a Better Age.

## Major Program: Family and Children's Services

**Program Category: Adoption Services**

- To implement amendments to the Adoption Act providing for assisted adoptions, and for native children to maintain cultural connections, and for older children to maintain significant relationships

**Program Category: Child In Care Services**

- To review policy for the provision of after care services which aid children to make a smooth and effective transition to adulthood and full independence.

## Major Program: Housing

**Program Category: Housing Initiative and Programs**

- To maximize the involvement of the private sector in meeting the rental housing needs of British Columbians;
- To help British Columbians meet market determined prices for their living accommodation;
- To increase the supply of affordable rental housing; "affordable" means the lower 25 percent of the market for the region;
- To help eligible British Columbians buy and maintain their homes;

## Major Program: Income Assistance

**Program Category: Health Services and Benefits**

- To develop, implement and evaluate the health services aspects of the At-Home Support Program for parents of children with handicaps.

**Program Category: Income Assistance Benefits and Services**

- To establish an enhanced range of supports to the economic independence of single parent families on income assistance during the 1990s, in consultation with other ministries and federal counterparts.
- To continue the program restructuring process commenced in 1989-90 in order to link these programs more clearly to recipient independence.
- To improve the ministry's ability to target programs in a flexible manner consistent with both differing needs in different regions of the province and with changes in demand.
- To ensure maximum access by ministry clients to programs in the context of federal/provincial agreements and in cooperation with other involved ministries.

# Strengthening Our Partnerships

## Major Program: Rehabilitation and Support Services

**Program Category: Residential Support for the Mentally Handicapped**

- To describe, in full, the community living service system which replaces the institutional model, as a framework for ministry and interministry policy development, planning and implementation through the 1990s.

**Program Category: Support to Children with Special Needs**

- To initiate a policy development process which promotes full cross-program and cross-ministry co-ordination of the complete range of government programs which support children with disabilities.

## Major Program: Family and Children's Services

**Program Category: Child Protection Services**

- To work toward an interministry strategy on all planning aspects of child sexual abuse
- To develop comprehensive, interministry protocols and training packages so that all investigations of children at risk are carried out in a legal, appropriate and consistent manner.
- To encourage increased responsibility for Native Family and Children's Service on the part of Bands/Tribal Councils.

**Program Category: Child In Care Services**

- To implement the second year of the provincial strategy for foster home recruitment and retention in consultation with provincial and regional stakeholder groups.
- To enhance a Provincial strategy for supporting and strengthening local Foster Parent Associations so that local issues are addressed in an effective, consistent manner to the benefit of all parties.

**Program Category: Family Support Services**

- To develop protocols guiding the cooperative provision of services to support families where the needs of the child fall within the mandate of more than one ministry.

## Major Program: Income Assistance

**Program Category: Family Maintenance Program**

- To strengthen interprovincial, interministry and national working relationships.

**Program Category: Adult Residential Resources**

- Work cooperatively with provincial/federal counterparts to enhance resources available for victims of family violence.

**Program Category: Services for Seniors**

- To respond to government direction following the release of the seniors task force report.

## Major Program: Housing

**Program Category: Housing Initiative and Programs**

- To maximize federal cost sharing through the federal/provincial agreement.
- To continue to work corporately with other provincial government ministries on housing initiatives.
- To maximize the involvement of all levels of government with the private sector in the development and administration of affordable housing initiatives.

# Commitment To Quality Service

## Major Program: Rehabilitation and Support Services

### Program Category: Residential Support for the Mentally Handicapped

- To establish a planning framework for maximizing effectiveness, quality and efficiency in the delivery of all residential programs in the 1990s.
- To commence the implementation of standards of care and case management which contribute to the achievement of consistency and equity for service recipients across the province in the 1990s.
- To identify levels of caregiver training required to complement these standards of care.

Taken together these priorities will provide the context for the ministry to address a range of specific program issues including, but not limited to:

- medical consents
- regional flexibility and service equity
- providing a continuum of services across the recipient's full lifespan
- ensuring affordability of supports to individual independence
- providing a focus for targeted research efforts
- establishing consistent standards of care and practice
- ensuring appropriate training for ministry staff and caregivers
- implementation of required planning, monitoring and evaluation systems

### Program Category: Support to Children with Special Needs

- To develop the policy framework needed to ensure an effective transition from the service system supporting families and children to the service system supporting the independence of adults.

- To ensure that community-based training and support programs are available to recipients on an equitable basis, and to ensure these programs are properly rationalized and dovetailed with residential programs at the provincial, regional, community and individual levels.
- To identify levels of training of service providers needed to match and complement the training of residential caregivers in the context of the ministry's standards of care and service

# Major Program: Family and Children's Services

**Program Category: Adoption Services**

- To review and develop innovative methods to recruit and stabilize adoption homes for special needs children.

**Program Category: Child Protection Services**

- To maintain and enhance practice standards governing ministry investigations and interventions in the lives of families so that these are handled in a consistent manner.
- To implement procedures which contribute to improved practice through the linkage of practice knowledge and current research on an ongoing basis.
- To implement workload analysis procedures to ensure limited staff resources are deployed in the most effective manner possible.

**Program Category: Child In Care Services**

- In consultation with major partners, to review the principles and standards which ensure all children in the care of the Superintendent of Family and Child Services are treated in a manner consistent with the laws and regulations governing the Superintendent's role.
- To complete a comprehensive review of the needs of children-in-care and the consequent planning process.
- To enhance staff training.
- To address concerns for children-in-care who have high medical needs.

- To rationalize the range of care options and the costs of care by developing the strategy for a level of care system which is consistent with the range of problems and needs presented by children entering the care of the superintendent.

**Program Category: Family Support Services**

- To implement a standardized system for monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of all family support services.
- To develop cross-program guidelines for the provision of ministry services to families.

## Major Program: Income Assistance

**Program Category: Health Services and Benefits**

- To rationalize and consolidate health services policies across programs and ministries.
- To develop a framework for determining cost effective program expenditures.
- To develop improved cost monitoring capability.

**Program Category: Income Assistance Benefits and Services**

- To continue the program review and restructuring process to position these services as "Programs for Independence" in the 1990s, providing Temporary Assistance and Income Assurance to eligible persons.
- To harmonize income assistance and housing policies.

**Program Category: Family Maintenance Program**

- To proceed with plans to computerize the maintenance program delivery system after initial implementation.
- To develop the staff training resources needed to ensure service quality on an ongoing basis.
- To conduct a market basket study in support of the program review process so that the future determination of rates is simplified and rationalized in the context of leading economic and social indicators.

**Program Category: Adult Residential Resources**

- To review the distribution of available funds for resources.

## Major Program: Housing

- To maximize the use of government funding to provide cost effective and adequate housing to those in core need.
- To review and evaluate current housing programs in order to assess whether or not the ministry is meeting its mandate. The result of this review and evaluation will be to attain a quality service in terms of this mandate.
- To continue to target the ministry's housing initiatives to those groups requiring adequate affordable housing. These groups being seniors, families, single parents and the handicapped in core need.

# Conclusion

The Ministry of Social Services and Housing exists in a complex environment, characterized by rapid social and economic change, as well as constant evolution and redefinition of the ministry's mandate relative to political direction, the Province's finances, public expectations and conventional beliefs about the "public good".

As we enter the final decade of the 20th Century, it is incumbent on us to meet the challenge of the future with a greater "state of readiness". We believe it is in the public's interest to begin now to identify major social, economic and service trends/factors which will influence the well being of the Province and its citizens.

This plan is the ministry's first step in this process. It will be renewed and updated annually. As the 1990s begin, ministry programs and services will be guided by the four strategic priorities for 1990-91:

- Independence and Initiative,
- Commitment to Quality Service,
- Strengthening Our Partnerships, and
- Sharing Our Achievements